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ABSTRACT

This handbook is designed for use by anyone involved in providing educational or training opportunities for women. Chapter 1 discusses the outcome of women's education and use of this handbook. Chapters 2-6 make general suggestions about various issues around the provision of high quality, relevant, and responsive education and training for women. Chapter 2 considers making women welcome. It focuses on practical and personal barriers: timing, care of dependents, accessibility, entry qualifications, finance, and benefits and grants. Chapter 3 discusses needs assessment, target groups, outreach and networking, publicity, and initial advice and guidance. Chapter 4 addresses content, learning approaches, and progression. Chapter 5 focuses on objectives, feedback and monitoring, and assessment and certification. Chapter 6 discusses staff and their support and training. Each chapter begins with a list of key points and ends with a checklist that can be used to assess progress in providing women's education. Chapter 7 lists some questions to help staff address the issues. Appendixes include a checklist of good practice for planning educational provision for women; a selected reading list of 47 references on women's education; and a list of resources and materials for women's education--self-help groups, child care, course materials for educational work with women, useful books for women learners, and guidelines for good practice in women's education. (YLB)

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WOMEN LEARNING:

IDEAS, APPROACHES & PRACTICAL SUPPORT

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A Handbook for Women's Education

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NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ADULT CONTINUING EDUCATION

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Women Learning

Ideas, approaches and practical support

NIACE REPLAN

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The quotations from women learners are taken from:

REPLAN Review, number 5 (1989)

Breaking the Barriers, by Wendy Moss (1987)

Learning Ourselves: A video resource pack

FEU Research Project (490) on women-only provision

Foreword

This is an important book. Essential reading for anyone who wants to offer those all-important second chances to women, whether they are already running courses or are in the initial planning stages.

It provides not only ideas, approaches, checklists and practical support, but also stands as an indication of what counts as quality provision in this particular area of work.

Women's provision is all too often seen as a necessity in terms of meeting skills shortages and the demographic downturn. With this as the priority, the real, longer-term needs of women are never actually addressed.

Women Learning will help to change that way of working and thinking because it encourages the consideration of women's needs as a key factor in the planning and delivery process. If the messages of the handbook are adhered to in planning and delivering educational or training opportunities for women, whether by those working with women learners in a wide variety of contexts, or by policy-makers and decision-takers, then significant changes – which will be to the ultimate real benefit of women themselves – will emerge.

What a significant few have already achieved will become an integral part of normal accepted practice.

JENNY HUNT
Former REPLAN Field Officer, now BBC Education Officer.

Letter from a *New Opportunities for Women* course student in response to a questionnaire

"I have filled in your questionnaire as best I can, although question one (the best thing about the course) was very difficult, the reason being that I really enjoyed everything about the NOW course. If the point of the questionnaire is to prove that the NOW course is worthwhile and a valid course for the future then my answer would always be 'YES'. It has opened my eyes to so many aspects in education that I thought were long dead to someone who left school 20 years ago. I should imagine any woman who enrols on the NOW course would never feel the same about herself ever again. I could never go back to how I was 12 months ago and I think it's sad if any woman, after completing the course, just drifts back to a mundane existence. Most of all, I feel I want to tell every bored or down-trodden housewife to go out there and do something for themselves, before it is too late to benefit from the opportunities available to them. We owe it to ourselves as individuals.

I hope you didn't mind my writing this note but I felt I needed to and if it helps just one other woman then it will have been worthwhile. If I can help in any way in the future, I would be only too happy to do so." 99

1

Introduction

Who this handbook is for

Why the handbook is needed

What does women's education do?

How this handbook should be used

Who this handbook is for

This handbook is designed to be of use to anyone who is involved in providing educational or training opportunities for women.

It will be of particular relevance to those who wish to initiate such provision, or modify existing provision, with the needs of women in mind. This includes those in a more formal college context as well as those working in the informal community sphere.

It is also relevant to policy-makers and decision-takers who are responsible for allocating resources to such provision.

Why the handbook is needed

Women's talents and potential have traditionally been underused and underdeveloped and their experience undervalued. In consequence, every effort should be made to help women take advantage of new education and training opportunities and develop more skills.

Currently, skills shortages and demographic changes are leading employers to try and recruit more women into the work-force. Equally, the same demographic changes, combined with recent education legislation, are moving colleges and other providers of education to attract greater numbers of adults, particularly women, to the opportunities which they offer. Education is not just about developing the skills of the workforce. It is something of immense value in its own right which can confer multiple benefits, some of which are immediate and obvious, others less easily perceived, upon learners. Education can also be a potent catalyst for personal and collective change. Unfortunately, however, many barriers still exist which prevent women from taking up learning opportunities.

Women who have taken time out from paid work while raising a family often feel hesitant about going back to work. They may need to regain their confidence, update or acquire skills and be made aware of the options available to them. Many women left school without fulfilling their potential and went into routine jobs without realising what alternative choices were available. Such women welcome the chance to return to education and training. Experience has shown that many are capable of reaching high levels of attainment or of entering areas of study and work which they had not previously considered.

'My mother didn't think it was necessary for a girl to have any more education: although I was given a choice I didn't really want to go against her wishes. Everyone else was leaving so it seemed the right thing to do at the time.'
Mature student on why she didn't stay on at school.
'My marriage broke up and I found myself in an ideal position to consider full-time education – to enhance my career prospects, hopefully.'
Mature student on why she came to re-enter education.

The personal needs of women may not be connected to the economic needs of society as a whole: they are educational needs which have always existed and will continue to exist, even when the urgent demand for more women in the workforce has declined.

This is not to suggest, however, that women learners are all the same, with broadly similar needs and aspirations. On the contrary, they can come from a variety of social backgrounds and cultures, have widely differing educational experiences and achievements, be black or white, young, middle-aged or elderly, lesbian or heterosexual, have a range of domestic commitments and responsibilities, and ascribe to the whole spectrum of political views and religious beliefs.

Over the past fifteen years, various kinds of provision designed solely or mainly for women have developed which have given us a wealth of experience on which to draw. Much of this provision has been for women only – for women students with women tutors. Such provision is particularly appropriate, given the disadvantages experienced by women in our society and the difficulties faced by women wishing to re-enter education or training, and the value of women-only provision cannot be overstated. The experience of learning alongside other women in a positive and supportive environment, exploring and celebrating similarities and differences, not only enhances confidence and raises awareness, but also changes lives.

The focus of this handbook is therefore on women-only provision and it is intended to be appropriate to the whole range of potential learners. However, the suggestions and guidelines apply equally to all provision which includes women.

It is worth bearing in mind that, under Section 47 of the Sex Discrimination Act (1986), it is permitted to offer training provision for the members of one sex only for three reasons:

If, in the preceding twelve months, such work has been carried out solely or mainly by members of the opposite sex *in the UK*.

If, in the preceding twelve months, that particular work has been carried out solely or mainly by members of one sex *in an*

area within the UK.

- To help fit for employment those who have not been in regular full-time employment for some time because of *domestic or family responsibilities.*

What does women's education do?

- Women's education is designed to meet women's learning requirements whatever their age, background, race, creed, marital status, disability or sexual orientation.
- Women's education values and draws on women's experience and seeks to develop their self-motivation and self-confidence.
- Women's education employs and promotes co-operative rather than hierarchical approaches.
- Women's education is about learning different ways of relating to and functioning in society.

Given these key features of women's education, it is clear that any institution or organisation wishing to promote or develop this work should have already established a clear Equal Opportunities Policy which applies to all groups and individuals regardless of age, background, race, creed, marital status, disability or sexual orientation, and which enables and supports women's access to all levels of education as well as to employment and training.

It is important for an action plan or guidelines to have been drawn up to ensure the implementation of the Equal Opportunities policy, and for procedures to have been established to address areas where the policy is not carried out. Most educational institutions and organisations now operate with such a policy, but in order to provide a climate in which women's education can flourish, steps need to be taken to ensure that it applies in practice.

How this handbook should be used

To talk of provision for women only should not lead to the assumption that all women have the same needs, share the same circumstances or start from the same point. Differences and disadvantages based on social class, race, age, disability and locality have different effects. Provision may be needed for different groups of women which is deliberately designed for their interests and needs and takes account of their circumstances.

This handbook can therefore only make general suggestions about provision for women which may have to be modified. The contents are designed to be used selectively and flexibly.

There are nevertheless certain basic requirements which cannot

be ignored and these form the key guidelines, not only for women-only provision but for any provision which aims to attract women.

'The groups have got me out of sitting at home thinking of what to do with myself. I've been brought out of myself; it's a group of women like me. We understand and support each other. Others rally round when one of us is low.'

Each chapter ends with a checklist which can be used as a way of assessing the progress which your institution or organisation has made in providing women's education. The checklists are there not only to help you identify the gaps, but also to give some guidance about how to improve the provision.

Remember, when you start to make your institution or organisation a more appropriate environment for women, you ultimately benefit everyone. All parents can make use of childcare facilities; younger students can also make a valuable contribution to the monitoring and assessment of courses; more practical and co-operative methods of teaching and learning can be effective for the whole range of students. A woman-centred institution is also person-centred.

Throughout the handbook, the following terms are used:

- **Unwaged women** refers to women who are not currently in paid employment.
- All types of provision are referred to as **courses** even though this may not be an accurate description of occasional provision or classes where there are no sequential sessions.
- Any reference to **tutors** should be taken to include anyone who is responsible for the delivery of provision or for co-ordinating group activities, whatever their usual designation.

2

Making Women Welcome

Key Points

Organisers of educational provision for women need to take account of women's lifestyles, constraints, family responsibilities and commitments.

Lack of good childcare facilities is a major barrier to participation in education for many women and a major cause of drop-out. Provision of good quality childcare is essential to increase women's participation.

Premises need to be accessible, welcoming, comfortable and safe.

Enrolment fee levels and remission schemes are important factors in helping or hindering women's participation in education and training.

Information and advice on the implications of study for benefits should be available before students enrol on courses.

Women wanting to return to education, training or work are likely to face a number of barriers, **practically** in terms of their circumstances, and **personally** in terms of their own fears and concerns.

Practical barriers

Most women, whether or not they are in employment, have other responsibilities which providers of educational opportunities need to take into account. These may include caring for children or other dependants and fulfilling the demands of their domestic role. In addition, unwaged women may have no access to money of their own.

Personal barriers

Apparent lack of confidence and the low personal esteem exhibited by unwaged women may have several causes, but the three most common are:

- memories of unsuccessful schooling
- the effect of years at home with small children
- undervaluing of the domestic role.

Organisations or institutions hoping to attract more women should therefore be careful to design the provision so that it encourages the development of confidence and enhances self esteem.

'The College staff are extremely helpful and encouraging to the students, which is so nice for someone like me who had a poor education and felt sadly lacking in confidence. I feel very comfortable here and only wish I knew of the College's existence years ago.'

Timing

Classes and sessions need to be held during school hours and timed to allow for women to leave and collect their children. Remember that women may have to miss classes during school half-terms and holidays and if schools are closed for training days.

Other essential support facilities (e.g. childcare, libraries, Open Learning Centres, access to equipment, etc.) also need to be managed to take account of these practicalities.

Care of dependants

Women with pre-school age children may need childcare at low cost. Remember that this must be of high quality if women are to be confident in making use of it. Some women will prefer to make their own arrangements (perhaps with a childminder near their home, or with a relative or friend) but they may need financial help with this.

'For someone like myself who has come to the area without family or established friends, and you want to leave your children with someone you can trust, a creche is the only way to do that. Unless you have a creche, you're stuck in the house.'

More and more women are now looking after elderly relatives or members of their family with disabilities. The provision of 'respite' care (from local social services or voluntary organisations) can enable women to attend courses, but funding for an alternative carer might be needed.

Accessibility

Not all women have their own transport, so places where education is provided need to be accessible by public transport or on foot. More importantly, the place should be easy to find and welcoming to women. Above all, it must be safe for women, both students and tutors, to enter. Important considerations here, particularly for evening provision, are external lighting of all paths and car parks, and the presence of a responsible member of staff who can be called upon in an emergency and whose identity is known to students and tutors.

'Getting there is the most difficult because I get into the rush hour (on the tube) – if I take a bus I have to wait in the cold and he doesn't like it ... he liked the creche – it's a lovely creche.'

Accessibility does not only concern women with disabilities, although their needs should obviously receive positive attention. Premises (buildings, rooms and other facilities) should be accessible to all women, whatever their condition or circumstance.

Barriers are not always physical. Lack of signposting, unsafe or uncomfortable surroundings, remote or unfriendly people can all deter women from entering, especially on their first visit.

Sensitive tutors might meet their students at the main entrance or by reception for the first few sessions.

Educational provision for women does not have to be located in a college. If unwaged women are to be encouraged to attend, it might be better to hold the classes in a local school, community centre or church hall.

'People want places where they feel comfortable. I think people who put money into projects should look at what the users want. That's the important thing. You can't make people go and do what they don't want to do. This is the first step for people who really need it. People who go to college, they have got the confidence already. The people that you are trying to reach, ordinary people who maybe don't know what they want, to come here and find out what they want.'

Entry qualifications

Providers of educational opportunities for women need to check carefully that any stated entry qualifications are really necessary for the course they offer. Experience and skills, not always recognised or certificated, may be more important than formal qualifications. Chapter 3 looks at this issue in more detail.

Finance

This can be a major barrier for unwaged women. Where fees are charged for provision, reduction and exemption schemes should be widely advertised and need to recognise the dependent position of women:

- who are themselves claimants
- who are dependent on claimants
- who are low-paid themselves or in part-time work
- who have partners on low pay
- who have no access to money of their own.

Remember, some women may be dependent on a partner who does not support their wish to re-enter education, training or work.

Benefits and grants

Unwaged women do not always register as unemployed and so have no UB40. Some do not understand the complexities of

benefit systems and are unaware of their entitlements. Local, up-to-date information and advice on benefit regulations and the implications of study should be readily available, particularly for women who are themselves claiming benefit or in part-time work.

The same local, accurate and comprehensive advice should be available about grants and other entitlements. The cost of studying is not just confined to course or class fees. Examinations and practical work; equipment and materials; books and stationery; travel, etc. all cost money and students need to be aware of this and given assistance wherever possible.

Finally, a most important consideration should be that any decisions about, or provision of, financial assistance should be made promptly. Women on benefit need to know what costs are incurred or what help they will receive.

'My husband is unemployed and so I get a grant from the Local Authority for myself and the children but in the summer holidays I'm expected to sign on and claim unemployment benefit. What no one told me was that this summer benefit is for me only and I can't claim anything for the children. You try keeping four children, three of whom are teenagers, on that! If this had been made clear in advance I would have budgeted for it – so there was no holiday for us this year!'

Obviously, removing some of these barriers has resource implications which have to be acknowledged and addressed. But the greatest barriers are caused by negative attitudes and lack of knowledge and information, all of which can be remedied at no cost at all.

'The college does its best to take account of the particular difficulties of women combining study with domestic responsibilities – it's female oriented.'

CHECKLIST

Use the checklist to assess how well your organisation or institution has adapted to the access needs of women.

Do you:	✔	✘
Provide day-time provision at times convenient for women with children and other dependants?	⌟	⌟
Time evening provision so that women with domestic commitments can get there?	⌟	⌟
Locate classes and courses in local communities within walking or 'pushchair' distance, or in places easily accessible by public transport?	⌟	⌟
Ensure adequate signposting and lighting at centres and other venues?	⌟	⌟
Provide good, reasonably priced or free childcare, or childcare expenses for day and evening provision?	⌟	⌟
Have you consulted a local professional such as a local authority childcare adviser or the Pre-school Playgroups Association on setting up childcare provision?	⌟	⌟
Do you ensure that practical and financial support for childcare provision is continuous throughout programmes, and a permanent service?	⌟	⌟
Are your existing childcare arrangements adequately resourced?	⌟	⌟
Have you registered your existing provision with social services? Do you provide childcare other than at times that restrict women's choices to courses confirming traditional roles?	⌟	⌟
Do you help women and workers feel that children are welcome and their needs acknowledged?	⌟	⌟
Are your childcare staff carefully chosen?	⌟	⌟

Do they have appropriate personal qualities and experience, as well as previous training? ⌟ ⌟

Are there good pay and conditions for childcare staff? ⌟ ⌟

Do childcare staff have opportunities for in-service training? ⌟ ⌟

Are you assisting women by:

☐ Providing some free courses and classes out of your base budget? ⌟ ⌟
☐ Providing the necessary support services (such as advice and guidance, language support, some childcare facilities) from the base budget to facilitate access for women? ⌟ ⌟
☐ Making available discretionary grants and awards so that women can take up vocational and further and higher education opportunities? ⌟ ⌟

Does your fee structure act as an incentive or a deterrent to recruitment? ⌟ ⌟

Does your organisation or institution offer reduced fees for certain types of classes such as examination and other vocational courses: parent education and courses for playgroup leaders; Fresh Start; Return to Learn; foundation studies? ⌟ ⌟

Does it offer reduced fees for:

☐ older adults on retirement pensions ⌟ ⌟
☐ under-18s ⌟ ⌟
☐ the unwaged and their dependants ⌟ ⌟
☐ single parent families ⌟ ⌟
☐ recipients of widows' pensions, housing and sickness benefits, disability pensions? ⌟ ⌟

Is there free enrolment for people on low incomes, such as recipients of Income Support, Unemployment Benefit, Family Credit, and for those with special qualifying circumstances, irrespective of their partner's employments status? ⌟ ⌟

Do you offer:

- ☐ the option to pay by instalments? ⌟ ⌟
- ☐ special fees for taster sessions? ⌟ ⌟

3

Finding Out About Needs, Attracting Students And Offering Support

Key Points

Needs assessment should take account of local labour market information as well as identifying opportunities for educational progression and recognising individual need.

Differentiation and targeting are important if work is to be cost-effective.

Networking and outreach work ensure that provision is properly geared to local need.

Publicity needs to be clear, jargon-free and easy to understand.

Educational guidance and an emphasis on accrediting prior experience and learning can enable women to make the right choices and to feel confident about them.

Assessing need

Before making provision for unwaged women there are two kinds of need which have to be assessed – those external needs which lie in the local community, and those individual needs which lie within the women themselves.

Education and training opportunities do not exist in a vacuum; they need to be located in their local context. Any provision must allow for progression to further or supplementary education, training or employment. Providers therefore need to be aware of what other provision is available locally that is appropriate for women, and also need to know about the availability of jobs and local skills shortages.

Knowledge of other local education and training opportunities and of local job market information is the framework within which the provider can begin to address the individual needs of the women themselves. Many women do not see their immediate needs as part of a progression to further education, training or paid employment, but as a response to their current circumstances.

Provision in the community for women's needs is as valid as responding to the needs of local employers, but it is important to guard against providing opportunities for women which raise their aspirations but lead nowhere.

Target groups

Providers also need to have a clear idea about which women they feel can benefit most from the opportunities they have to offer. The needs of women vary considerably according to social, economic and personal factors, and provision needs to be targeted and appropriate.

There is a danger that the specific needs of different groups of women can be overlooked within a general notion of providing for all women, and this is particularly true of women-only provision. It is important to recognise differences: there are differences of race, class, age, sexuality and circumstance which will be reflected in life experience, expectations and learning need. Finding out what women need and which women need it can most effectively be achieved through outreach and networking.

Outreach and networking

One of the best ways in which an organisation or institution can assess and meet local need is through the appointment of outreach workers. Making contacts in the community requires local

knowledge, and in this context the work is most successfully carried out by women who are themselves known and accepted in that community. Many educational providers find that it is most appropriate to employ women who have previously been students themselves, though this is not always possible in the early stages.

Outreach workers identify key people in the community and work with and through them. Their role is one of liaison – between the providers and what they can offer, and the students, in this case women, and what they need.

Successful outreach work needs to be well-resourced and staffed by skilled workers who have sufficient time and adequate funding. If this seems an impossible dream in terms of your organisation's or institution's available resources, it may be worth looking into the possibility of making a joint appointment with one or more local education providers, all of whom can benefit from the arrangement.

Even if none of this can become a reality in the foreseeable future, the importance of networking with other agencies locally cannot be over-emphasised. Staff from the area health authority, social services department, Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) and voluntary organisations can provide valuable background information to providers, as well as encouraging women with whom they are in contact to take advantage of educational provision. They can also provide an important point of entry for college staff into local groups so that women themselves are invited to identify their educational needs and interests. Timetabling a member of staff for a networking role is almost always cost-effective.

Publicity

Having assessed the need and targeted the provision, the recruitment process with relevant publicity can then be planned. It is important to see this as a process and not just as a single event or the distribution of leaflets.

Publicity, whether by personal contact or on paper, has to convey clearly for whom the provision is appropriate. If courses are particularly designed for unwaged women or women without educational qualifications, then the publicity should make this clear. Publicity is a term used to indicate a wide range of methods and approaches. Providers have to decide which is most appropriate for them. It might include:

- leaflets and/or posters in the places women visit regularly, e.g. health centres and doctors' surgeries, supermarkets and local shops, parent/toddler groups and playgroups, parents' noticeboards in schools, community centres

- distribution of leaflets and other material through local schools, asking headteachers if children can take them home
- placing leaflets inside the local free papers. Rates for this are often very reasonable and the papers are delivered to almost every home
- articles in the local paper, perhaps with a photograph, which can be more effective than advertisements
- items on local radio including interviews with tutors and current or past students where possible.

The language used in any publicity is very important. Community languages may be needed, in which case funding will have to be found to pay translators. Language is also important in other ways. Remember to be aware of literacy levels and avoid educational jargon. Symbols, graphics and, above all, photographs are very useful if they are selected with care.

Publicity material should give the name of the person to contact as well as addresses, phone numbers and extension numbers. It should be phrased in encouraging terms:

'If you would like to know more about ..., then phone Jane Brown.'

'If you think this course might be for you, call in and ask for Jane Brown ...'

'I think it is nice when you have a prospectus and you can actually go and talk to somebody in the place and find out ... rather than just doing it over the phone and fill out application forms ... just being able to talk ... the woman I talked to, she was a tutor on one of the courses, and being able to talk to her made it different – it was just better, more real.'

Many providers find that their most effective publicity comes through word of mouth and personal contact. Once a course is established, groups of students can be encouraged to recruit others.

Initial advice and guidance

Information, advice and guidance should always be available during the recruitment process for courses for women. This may be provided by an independent agency – a local Educational Guidance service if one exists – or by the institution or organisation offering the course. Women expressing interest in a course should always be made aware of exactly what is on offer so that their expectations match those of the providers.

But it is equally important to make women aware of other

alternatives if they exist, so that they can make an informed decision. It is tempting to be so concerned about recruiting sufficient women that the appropriateness of what is offered for any particular woman can be overlooked.

'I think finding out what was available. I don't know how many phone calls I made to colleges that didn't quite do what I wanted. When you telephone colleges their line is usually engaged and when you get through to the switchboard the person you want to speak to, or that department, is engaged ... And it seems in colleges which do several courses, you go from one course organiser to another and you can't get all the information from one person.'

A leaflet which lists all the local provision for women is very useful. In areas where few other opportunities exist, institutions and organisations have a responsibility to consider carefully what they do provide and for which women it is appropriate.

Many organisations and institutions arrange a pre-course meeting or Open Day when women can find out more about the provision. It is important that providers make clear exactly what the course offers and what is expected, how much is fixed and how much is flexible. Research has shown that the most successful provision matches the expectations of the women students with those of the providers.

For most unwaged women, a re-entry route which requires no qualifications may be more appropriate, at least for the initial stage, since essential information, advice and guidance should be included in all re-orientation provision.

Even some women with good qualifications feel they are out of touch and that their qualifications were obtained too long ago to be acceptable.

'I decided to give it a try and wondered if I could cope with the course. I was lucky because I had someone to go with – had I been by myself I would have felt more nervous.'

An initial advice session or pre-course meeting might also usefully enable women to consider their prior learning and experience, and to look at the skills and knowledge which they have developed as a consequence. This can be a valuable exercise in validating competence acquired in unpaid work in the home, community and through volunteering, and can greatly improve women's confidence, particularly for those who have had little post-school formal education. It may also provide an introduction

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to building a portfolio which can then be used for a variety of purposes when the course has ended – moving on to a more advanced course, entering full-time training, going into employment.

It is worth noting that research and development work is currently taking place, carried out by Linda Butler on the accreditation of women's unpaid work and experience, particularly in terms of National Vocational Qualifications, with the increasing emphasis on vocational qualifications and the need for employers to recruit more women to compensate for shortfalls in the number of school-leavers. There is a strong possibility that in future competence in childcare, managing finances, setting priorities, time management and other domestic skills will be given official recognition.

CHECKLIST

Use this checklist to assess how well your organisation or institution is assessing need, recruiting women students, and providing initial guidance.

	✔	✘
Are you responding to the educational requirements of all groups of women including black women, women with disabilities, working-class women, older women, single parents?	⌟	⌟
Are women consulted in identifying their educational needs and interests?	⌟	⌟
Do mechanisms and structures exist for such consultation?	⌟	⌟
Do you offer any women-only courses or programmes?	⌟	⌟
Do you offer day-time provision for women?	⌟	⌟
Are you providing educational guidance to help women make appropriate educational choices?	⌟	⌟
Are you opening up opportunities that will make the most of women's potential by seeking to match education and training to both women's and employers' needs?	⌟	⌟

4

Learning Approaches And Progression

Key Points

As a result of sex-stereotyping, cultural processes and an education system that reflects a male ethos and culture, girls often have low expectations and consequently underachieve at school. The assumption that raising a family is a woman's primary role exacerbates this educational disadvantage.

The content of courses for women should be relevant and appropriate, centred where possible around women's concerns and perceptions. Women should be encouraged to review and value their own experiences and locate them in a wider context. Individual counselling should be available throughout the course, and learning through group work and activities should be encouraged.

Learning methods should be co-operative, shared and experiential where possible. They should encourage women to use prior knowledge and skills and should set challenges within a supportive environment. Flexible learning methods are the most effective.

Courses for women should be designed with progression in mind, and tutors need to recognise and be realistic about the possible routes which may be available. Ultimately, however, women have to be encouraged to make their own choice about the rate of progression which they feel able to tackle, and one of the most valuable contributions which a tutor can make to a student's future is to show her how to obtain further advice and support whenever she needs it.

Content

Most provision for women falls into one of the following categories: courses in 'non-traditional' skills (i.e. in areas that have traditionally been dominated by men) and 're-orientation' courses (i.e. for women moving from full-time domestic duties into education or training prior to re-entering paid employment).

Obviously the content of these courses will differ considerably, although there may well be some common elements. Unwaged women, however, do not only re-enter through women-only provision but may join any course or class – WEA, GCSE, BTEC or City and Guilds, access courses or degree courses.

This section of the handbook can consider the content of courses only in a general way, since their actual subject matter will depend on the nature and purpose of the course. Furthermore, some content will be rigidly prescribed – as in a set syllabus for GCSE or City and Guilds. At the other extreme, there may be no pre-determined subject as such and the content can be negotiated with the students themselves – as in a WEA class – or determined by them without a tutor in an informal self-help group. Some may choose a topic for each session or pursue a theme which interests them.

In provision where the content is not prescribed there is plenty of scope to redress the balance and focus on issues which concern women, but whatever the subject, there are certain principles about content which should be remembered in making any provision for women.

The content of the course should be relevant for the women it attracts. This does not mean that it has to cover only stereotypical 'women's interests' but that issues which are relevant to the women should be recognised.

Any subject material should attempt to make women and their concerns visible. Where there can be a choice of material, then women's experiences and example should be included.

Whatever the subject of the provision, it is important that it is appropriate for the particular women concerned, in both content and level. As many good access courses have shown, most subjects can be approached at any level, even if the intention is to move to more advanced material by the end of the course. The initial stages are crucial in allowing women to feel confident and not threatened by their re-entry.

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'The Access course helped me so much. You see, I was learning completely new things and I had no previous knowledge to hang it on. There was so much to learn so quickly. But we built on basic principles and we learnt and we began to question. It was this process that built my confidence. I saw myself as a thinking person.'

Many subjects can start from the experiences of women and yet at the same time recognise their individuality and difference. Encouraging women to draw examples from their own experience not only recognises and values that experience, but also shows women that they have something useful to contribute. Women's contributions are too often labelled as 'anecdotal' or 'subjective', as if that made them less valid.

'I went with trepidation. I was expecting it to be more formal and I was pleased to see that it wasn't ... What I learned in my first few lessons was that what I had to say was as important as what other people had to say. And I was interested in what other people had to say.'

All education for women should help them to locate their own individual experiences in a wider social context and thus help them understand their position in society and the importance of their particular roles. Again, women need to value themselves and their contributions to society rather than making their domestic and caring role seem of no importance. Their knowledge and skills need to be revalued, too.

The content of many subjects is presented as factual and concrete, where there is no place for feelings or opinions. All education should challenge this, but particularly that which is designed for women. Personal reflection and the recognition of feeling is a key component to all learning, and the subject matter (as well as the method of studying it) must allow for this.

Provision for women must always make a space for individual counselling with a woman tutor, which should be timetabled into the programme. It is particularly important that women re-entering education have ongoing personal support and advice, not only about the current course but also about their future plans. The effect on a woman of new experiences and learning, and of meeting a different group of acquaintances, will also be felt by her family and may meet with some difficult responses. Individual counselling will help her to review what is happening in her personal life and work out how she is going to cope with it.

Experience has also shown the importance of group

counselling for women. In some women-only provision which has no external syllabus, group-enhancing activities have been given priority and the value of group counselling demonstrated; in other types of provision, particularly that which is more individually skills based (e.g. computing), space should be found for group activities.

A residential component is often found to be very important in courses for women. Although it can be difficult for women to go away from home for a weekend – and childcare provision is essential – the benefits are enormous. For some women it will be the first time they have been away without their families. This in itself is a significant event. For all the women concerned it will be an intense group experience and this, too, can be very significant.

'Although its very hard to pick one particular thing, my most memorable was the very first visit to Northern College. I was so impressed as it opened my eyes to the possibilities that do exist for women like myself to continue their education.'

Methods

Just as the content of any course for women should be woman-centred, so, too, should the methods used to deliver it. Indeed, there is a close relationship and considerable overlap between the content and methodology.

It is worth noting the following guidelines for good learning methods.

- Learning should be active, not passive. Students should be encouraged to participate in the learning process and to work on, or discuss, materials and ideas. They should be encouraged to perceive knowledge rather than receive it.
- Learning methods should be interactive and shared. Experience has shown that women prefer co-operative ways of working, enabling them to share ideas and experiences, to support each other through learning together.

'The boost of confidence which came from the support of the rest of the group. Realising that you were not the only one who felt inadequate and gaining strength from that. Meeting people from a cross-section of the community I would not otherwise have come into contact with. Stimulating discussion.'

- The importance of the group for learning, as well as for

support and encouragement, is a feature of all women's education. The position of the tutor as a member of that group and as a learner also, rather than an expert or teacher, is another key characteristic which has relevance to the methods used.

- Learning should be experiential whenever possible. This involves not only practising and doing but also pausing and reflecting, that is, learning from the experience. The opportunity to talk about experience is another important part of learning.
- Learning methods should encourage and allow for affective (that is feelings) as well as cognitive (that is knowing and thinking) processes to be acknowledged and used.
- Learning methods which value and use prior knowledge and skills enable women to recognise their strengths and to (re)gain confidence in their abilities.
- Learning which sets challenges and allows women to assess their progress is important, so long as it takes place in a supportive environment. Women want to know how well they are doing and how far they have improved. Self-assessment, peer-assessment, as well as externally imposed and validated assessment, can all be used, but the process must be sensitive and supportive.
- Learning which can be broken down into manageable pieces – by dividing a long course into a series of modules, for example – also allows for flexibility. Women's lives can be fragmented and unpredictable; unforeseen events or accidents can interrupt study patterns. Having the flexibility of modules of learning can help women whose progress is unavoidably interrupted.

Many women re-entering education have unpleasant memories of their earlier schooling. The methods used in women's education, therefore, should be such that they do not renew the feelings of inferiority and failure associated with earlier learning. This is why co-operation rather than competition is emphasised, and why students and tutors need to be perceived as of equal value in the learning process.

'This course has given me a new lease of life. I am now more confident and aware. I consider that I am having the education that I missed when I was younger, although it has been a struggle at times. It provided me with a foothold back into education, a way to start without feeling embarrassed about being in a classroom. It gave me confidence to go forward.'

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Progression

Progression means moving on – or where do women go and what do they do when the course has ended or the provision is no longer appropriate for them?

Educational provision which allows women to drift away with no clear idea of where they are going or what is available is irresponsible; it raises expectations and then fails to fulfil them.

The most important component of any provision for women is the availability of individual information, advice and guidance. This, as we have seen, should be available before, during and at the end of any course and will ensure that women make informed choices about their current and future plans. Each woman needs to make her own decision but she will require help and information to do this; her decision must then be respected.

'The insight it gave you into various courses and employment opportunities available. More confidence to carry on. Ability to talk to other women, discuss and exchange ideas for our futures. Also, the help given about education and training was very extensive.'

Progression routes depend on three things:

- the interests and intentions of the woman concerned
- her particular circumstances
- what is available in the locality.

In particular, women need to be well prepared if they are moving from women-only provision to mixed or mainstream courses. Networks and other local contacts between providers can ease this transition, as well as allowing women to have reliable information and realistic expectations about the alternatives that are available.

'Although I am not sure, I may possibly go on to study for a degree and then into teaching.'
'Still not positive but I'm thinking of going back to College on some kind of care course.'

The notion of progression has to be treated with caution. If women make their own decisions, they may choose to return to their full-time role at home until they feel ready to move on again. Educational experiences and qualifications should be seen not as

wasted but as investments 'in the bank' until needed. Knowing what is possible for any woman is important, even if she decides to postpone further action for a while.

'I have no particular plans but since going on the NOW course I am more content with the person that I am. When my youngest child is full-time at school I would like to get some qualifications and start a new career.'

Women may also choose to move 'sideways' rather than following the traditional educational progression route of 'upward'. Individuals may feel they need to repeat courses, to try other equivalent routes or to acquire additional qualifications before moving on. Some women may become involved in running their own learning groups – for example, by joining a WEA Women's Branch.

Finally, it must be accepted that unwaged women might decide not to move towards paid employment immediately. The dual load of family and work might not be appropriate and society has to learn to recognise and value the importance of all unpaid work, whether in the home or in the voluntary sector. Many women prefer to gain experience as unpaid helpers in schools and playgroups; others, of necessity, do not have that choice and may need to take the first available job, even if it is part-time, low paid and with few prospects.

Whatever the decisions of individual women, it is important that their experience of learning as adults opens their minds to the wider possibilities and gives them the confidence and the contacts to return for more advice or support when they feel the need for it.

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CHECKLIST

Use the checklist to assess how well your organisation or institution supports women through curriculum, methods and progression routes.

	✔	✘
Has the content of teaching and training been examined to ensure that it is non-sexist and anti-racist?	⌟	⌟
Have teaching methods and approaches been examined for their appropriateness for women?	⌟	⌟

Are you providing:

☐ A curriculum in which women, their interests and concerns are actively visible in the content of all courses?	⌟	⌟
☐ A curriculum for women which does not focus exclusively on domestic skills but which also provides opportunities for self-expression, self-development, and the acquisition of a wide range of practical skills?	⌟	⌟
☐ Programmes and activities which reflect the needs, interests and experience of specific groups of women, e.g. black women, women with disabilities, working-class women, older women, single parents?	⌟	⌟
☐ Introductory programmes in local or neighbourhood settings specifically for new women learners?	⌟	⌟
☐ Programmes and activities to raise women's confidence, self-esteem and status, e.g. assertiveness, self-defence?	⌟	⌟
☐ Courses which explore gender issues and women's role and contribution to society?	⌟	⌟
☐ Programmes which prepare women to return to study or paid employment, New Opportunities, Wider Opportunities, Second Chance or Fresh Start programmes?	⌟	⌟
☐ Women-only science and technology and non-traditional skills programmes?	⌟	⌟

- ☐ Supporting courses such as literacy and numeracy, ESOL courses with language or bilingual support, study skills, special programmes for women with disabilities, all of which help women take advantage of other educational opportunities? ⌟ ⌟
- ☐ Access, bridging and other transitional programmes which enable women's progression to vocational further and higher education? ⌟ ⌟
- ☐ Programmes which help women move into and upwards in paid and voluntary work, e.g. management training, training in committee work, skills training? ⌟ ⌟

Are you opening up opportunities that will make the most of women's potential by:

- ☐ Discouraging traditional job segregation by offering programmes that enable women to move into non-traditional work areas and gain higher status jobs? ⌟ ⌟
- ☐ Offering skills training, updating, management training courses, confidence-boosting courses, work-related education and employment-linked courses for women? ⌟ ⌟

Do you have mechanisms for monitoring and recording employment outcomes for women participants in your programmes? ⌟ ⌟

5

Reviewing Quality And Assessing Standards

Key Points

Clear objectives and suggested outcomes should be established which nevertheless retain an element of flexibility. Course members should be involved as fully as possible in devising and agreeing them.

Feedback and review should be a continuous feature of course monitoring which ensures relevance and responsiveness. At a wider level, structured evaluation of provision for women, carried out by both students and tutors, should clearly fit into the management procedures of the organisation or institution.

Many women welcome external validation of their abilities, but it is important that this takes place in a supportive, encouraging environment. Self and peer group assessment are also useful features here.

Objectives

It is important that any kind of educational provision for women should have clear objectives, stating for whom it is intended and what the outcomes should be. At the very least, women involved in the course should be consulted about the objectives. Where possible, they should be responsible, along with the tutor, for devising and agreeing them. Monitoring and evaluation of the provision can then be carried out with reference to those objectives.

There is always a danger that if the objectives are too narrow and the outcomes too rigidly prescribed, they will not allow for individual circumstances. Thus the criteria used to indicate success must make allowance for numerous variables. The importance of using performance indicators which are a valid reflection of the educational process is expanded upon in *Completion Rates and other Performance Indicators in Educational Opportunities for Unwaged Adults* by Anna Dekker and Richard Whitfield (NIACE/REPLAN, 1989).

Effectiveness and efficiency in this context can only be realistically assessed if allowance is made for all the factors which affect women's re-entry into education and progression within it. For example, attendance registers must be examined in the light of women's other responsibilities; unexpected school closure can prevent women from attending a weekly class. A local outbreak of a childhood illness can mean that a woman with several children could be absent for a number of weeks; the sudden illness of an elderly parent might mean that a woman is unable to complete a course.

Rigid performance indicators based merely on cost or on statistical data, or lists of simplistic competences are not sufficiently complex to cope with the many variables in women's lives. Women have many reasons for wanting to re-enter education and the process of re-orientation is not a simple one. However, the four 'Output Indicators' recommended by Dekker and Whitfield:

- better employment prospects
- qualifications
- positive attitude towards further studies
- increased personal confidence and optimism

may provide a starting point for discussion on this issue.

Feedback and monitoring

The reservations about monitoring and evaluation outlined above should not be seen as a reason for not attempting to assess the efficiency and appropriateness of the provision. One of the characteristics of women's education has been its ability to respond flexibly to the needs of the particular women concerned. Feedback and review sessions should be built into the programme so that re-assessment can take place and continuous modifications be made.

It is important also to establish a structure whereby the totality of provision for women is regularly evaluated. This process can identify gaps, pinpoint areas where problems or difficulties have arisen, and highlight successful practice and positive achievement which can be developed for the future. Evaluation like this, to be fully effective, must obviously involve a dialogue between students and tutors which is properly structured and recorded. There should also be clearly identified procedures through which recommendations concerned with changes in the management of the organisation or institution can be placed before decision-takers and policy-makers.

Assessment and certification

For courses in which students are assessed or examined, and those with external validation, this process needs to be handled with care. Many unwaged women who re-enter education carry with them an unhappy legacy of educational failure and may not be able to cope with assessment in the initial stages. Others feel confident enough to seek an honest appraisal of their abilities so that they can make an informed decision about future options.

The issue of external validation is a difficult one. On the one hand, provision for women which is not validated can suggest that it is of little value in an educational climate which seeks to assess all learning and give certification to all learning experiences. On the other hand, such validation may place constraints on the providers, which then inhibits flexibility and responsiveness.

Experience with women-only provision has shown that it is not individual assessment as such that causes problems but the atmosphere in which it is carried out. With support and encouragement, most women can face assessment procedures and examinations. But combined with that support and encouragement must come information, advice and guidance about future possibilities.

An important trend in women's education has been to encourage both self-assessment and peer-group assessment. The

ability to make a realistic assessment of current attainment and future potential is a relatively new trend in education as a whole and is now gaining ground in mainstream education (for example via Records of Achievement) and through such developments as portfolio building.

Peer group assessment has emerged from the practice of group work in which the group as a whole assesses, encourages and rewards the progress of each of its members. Provision for women which uses the group as a supportive medium for learning has demonstrated the value of peer-group assessment as a significant element in an overall assessment framework.

CHECKLIST

Use the checklist to assess how well your organisation or institution is making progress on monitoring, evaluation and assessment procedures.

	✔	✘
Do you use monitoring procedures to ensure that women can benefit fully from educational opportunities?	❑	❑
Does your institution or organisation have an active evaluation process which keeps the curriculum under review?	❑	❑
Are students as well as tutors involved in drawing up objectives and outcomes?	❑	❑
Are stated objectives and outcomes used as benchmarks for course monitoring and evaluation?	❑	❑
Is there a clear route through which can be channelled recommendations concerning changes in management procedures or policy which will improve women's education?	❑	❑
Are self- and peer-group assessment an integral part of courses? Are there arrangements in place which support and encourage women involved in external examination or validation of their skills and abilities?	❑	❑

6

The Staff, Their Support And Their Training

Key Points

Female staff are the most appropriate tutors and managers for women's education.

Management style should reflect the learning methods and ethos of the provision.

Structured line management, clear support networks and the opportunity to participate in staff development programmes should be available to all staff involved in women's education.

Experience shows that women's participation in educational provision is greatly helped by the presence of women staff. Where they also share some of the experiences of the students concerned, women staff can also act as 'role models', as well as identifying with some of the problems which students face.

Institutions and organisations which provide education for adults have become increasingly aware of the need to practise a policy of equal opportunity for staff as well as to state it, but it nevertheless remains the case that women are often under-represented in senior management teams and proportionally over-represented among staff who are part-time and/or temporary. The status of the work can often be reflected in the status of the staff involved in carrying it out, and it is therefore important that wherever possible a full-time, senior, female member of staff is given responsibility for overseeing provision for women.

This is a significant feature, not only to ensure that women's needs and concerns are central to any decision or policy making, but also because a female manager is more likely to adopt a style which reflects the learning methods used in the provision. Co-operative, sharing, non-hierarchical styles of management which encourage participation by full and part-time staff as well as students will create an educational environment in which provision for women can flourish.

All staff involved in the provision will benefit from line-management procedures which include:

- a clear job description
- regular formal supervision sessions
- a structured annual appraisal which identifies training and development needs for the individual.

As with the assessment of students, staff usually welcome the opportunity to examine their performance, so long as they are able to do so in a supportive and encouraging environment. The importance of female line-managers is once again highlighted here.

In addition to line management, there is a need for support for staff involved in women's education through networking, meetings and one-to-one discussions. Involvement in relevant staff development and training sessions also gives support and improves the quality of the work. Wherever possible, part-time staff should be paid for additional time spent in meetings and training or development activities. Not only does this practice guard against the exploitation of often very committed, able staff, but it also raises the status of supervision, support and staff development.

CHECKLIST

Use the checklist to assess the progress which your institution or organisation has made in staffing and staff development for women's education.

What proportion of your full-time staff are women? %

What proportion of your part-time staff are women? %

What proportion of your teaching staff at each grade or level are women? %

What positions are held by women?

	✓	✗
Is the staffing policy in your organisation or institution fair and non-discriminatory?	⌟	⌟
Have steps been taken to ensure that recruitment, appointment and promotion procedures are non-discriminatory?	⌟	⌟
Are promotion routes available to both full and part-time staff?	⌟	⌟
Have steps been taken to encourage women to apply for promotion?	⌟	⌟
Does your in-service and staff development programme actively encourage the participation of all women staff, including part-timers?	⌟	⌟
Are part-time as well as full-time staff given the opportunity to participate in all institutional planning and policy-making activities?	⌟	⌟
Do your staff development programmes pay attention to tackling issues of sexism and racism?	⌟	⌟

7

Addressing The Issues

This handbook has raised some of the issues around the provision of high quality, relevant and responsive education and training for women. Some of the recommendations made can probably be carried out by your organisation or institution at relatively little cost, perhaps simply by changing your procedures or working in a different way. Others will entail more upheaval and/or expenditure, and may have to wait their turn in a queue of other priorities.

However far along the road your organisation or institution may be in terms of attracting and retaining women students, it is worth bearing in mind that by ensuring a more comfortable, responsive, sensitive and practically supportive environment for women, you are simultaneously improving the provision for all students.

These questions may help you and other staff to address some of the issues:

? What does the term 'Women's Education' mean for you?

? How might your organisation facilitate women's access to educational opportunities?

? Do your financial arrangements and fee policies deter or encourage women's participation? What changes are needed for short-term gains?

? How might you improve provision of good quality childcare to increase women's participation locally?

? What are the issues you will need to address to make the curriculum relevant, progressive and equitable?

? Educational guidance helps women to shape their lives. Are you enabling women to benefit from it?

? Can you encourage education and training that will make the most of women's potential?

? Do course monitoring and evaluation procedures include women staff and students? Are there effective arrangements whereby recommendations are fed in at policy-making level?

? How is your institution's staffing policy enabling women staff to make a positive contribution to planning and policy-making activities?

? Can you bring about change in your institution's practical arrangements that will bring real benefits to women? What needs to be done to achieve lasting results?

Appendix I

A Checklist Of Good Practice For Planning Educational Provision For Women

This checklist is intended for use by staff who are planning educational provision for women for the first time. It may also be a useful check for those currently running courses.

Aims and objectives

Why is your institution/organisation planning to provide educational opportunities for women?

What kind of provision are you planning?

What are the aims and objectives of this provision?

Recruitment

Which women are your main target group?

Have you checked what other provision for women is available in your locality?

Have you checked what employment opportunities or skill shortages exist in your locality?

Who is going to do the outreach work and how will it be done?

What forms of publicity are you planning?

Have you checked the wording of your publicity material?

Are translations into community languages needed?

Where will your publicity material be placed/distributed?

Who is the contact person named on it?

Does your institution/organisation produce a leaflet which gives all the local provision for women?

Are you organising a pre-course meeting or Open Day?

Support services

What practical arrangements have been made for:

- childcare and dependant care
- timing of sessions
- accessibility
- flexibility
- home base or secure place for belongings
- refreshments and coffee breaks
- finance – both provision and advice.

How will students be received and registered?

Who will be responsible for providing educational advice and guidance?

Staffing

Which staff will be involved as tutors?

Do they share a commitment to providing for unwaged women?

Have they been trained?

Have they experienced domestic responsibilities or returned to education after a break?

Have you identified the training and support needs of part-time staff?

What other staff may come into contact with women students?

Have they been made aware of the ethos of the course?

Funding

Are your resources adequate to meet the course objectives?

If not, have you consciously prioritised the provision you make?

Does the funding place any constraints on what you can provide?

Curriculum

Who has decided on the content of the course?

Have the students been consulted?

Will there be any negotiation over content?

If it is not negotiable, has the content been made clear to them?

Will individual and group counselling be available?

What teaching and learning methods will you use?

Will there be opportunities for women to talk together and to share their experiences?

Assessment

Will there be any assessment of the students?

Who will be responsible for it?

Will you or they keep a record of progress for each student?

How will you get feedback from the students?

Will you follow up what happens to them at the end of the course?

Progression and monitoring

Do you know what progression routes are available for them?

Have you made contact with other possible providers?

What guidance is built in during the course?

How will you evaluate your original objectives and monitor the success of your provision?

Appendix II

A Selected Reading List On Women's Education

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Appendix III

Resources And Materials For Women's Education

Self-help groups

A Guide to Running Informal Learning Groups.
Advice on setting up and running a 'self-help' group, suited to all kinds of informal learning.

A guide to running self-help groups.
A version on running informal learning groups for students on open learning courses.

Self-help learning groups.
A practical guide for organisers by Maggie Falshaw.
All the above available from: National Extension College, 18 Brooklands Avenue, Cambridge CB2 2HN.

Once Upon a Group, by Michael Kindred.
An informal guide to help all those involved in groups.
From: Michael Kindred, 20 Dover Street, Southwell, Nottinghamshire NG25 0EZ.

Learning Together: Fun, friendship and learning.
From: National Federation of Women's Institutes, 39 Eccleston Street, Victoria, London SW1W 9NT.

Childcare

Starting a Creche: A guide for local community groups.
A guide to setting up, organising and equipping a creche, emphasising the need for variety.
From: Gingerbread, 35 Wellington St, London WC2N 7BY.

Guidelines for Good Practice in Creches.
Information on setting up and running a good creche.
From: Oxford Creche Development Project, St Michael's School, Marston Road, Oxford.

Childcare: A guide to organisations, publications, research and campaigns concerned with day care provision and facilities for young children, compiled by Veronica McGivney.

A key resource.

From: National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, 19B De Montfort Street, Leicester LE1 7GE.

Course materials for educational work with women

Working Towards Change. A WEA training pack for tutors in women's education.

A collection of topic sheets in a plastic folder, with material suitable for individual tutors as well as for training sessions

Understanding Science: Ideas, methods, questions. Science courses for women.

This publication complements and extends a section in the *Working Towards Change* collection. Useful ideas for all kinds of tutors, not just those in science.

Getting Started.

A basic education pack for tutors working with women in informal learning groups, containing a collection of ideas and information for women to use. Equally good for shared learning groups without a tutor.

Women and Health Teaching Pack.

Activities and materials for use in women's health courses and discussion groups. This is a pack for anyone who wants to teach or learn about women's health with other women, providing a useful starting point for those new to the topic.

All the above available from: Workers' Educational Association, 9 Upper Berkeley Street, London W1H 8BY.

Teaching Computing to Women: A resource pack, by Mary Jennings and Robyn Smith.

Ideas and exercises suitable for use in an introductory course on computing for women.

From: National Extension College, 18 Brooklands Avenue, Cambridge CB2 2HY.

Greater Expectations, by T. Szivon and S. Dyson.

A source book for working with girls and young women.

From: Lifeskills Associates, 51 Clarendon Road, Leeds LS2 9NZ.

Assessment of Prior Learning and Achievement: A study guide and resource pack to support staff development.
From: National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, 19B De Montfort Street, Leicester LE1 7GE.

Useful books for women learners

Women Working It Out, by Jane Chapman.
A book addressed to women who want to return to work, with lots of advice and information.
From: COIC, Moorfoot, Sheffield S1 4PQ.

What Colour is Your Parachute?, by R. M. Bolles.
Updated regularly, this is a practical manual for job-hunters and career-changers. Although it originates in the United States, it has a lot of good exercises and ideas.
Published by: Ten Speed Press (US).

Build Your Own Rainbow: A workbook for career and life management, by B. Hopson and M. Scally.
The book contains 40 exercises for self-assessment but many could be used with a group and are particularly useful for women returners.
From: Lifeskills Associates, 51 Clarendon Road, Leeds LS2 9NZ.

Second Chances, by A. Pates and M. Good.
A guide to adult education and training opportunities, regularly updated.
From: COIC, Moorfoot, Sheffield S1 4PQ.

Returning to Work: Educational and training opportunities for women, compiled for the Women Returners Network.
An annual directory of courses and other provision throughout England and Wales.
Published by: Kogan Page.

Equal Opportunities: A career guide, by Anna Alston and Ruth Miller.
A career guide which gives information of direct concern to women, including the possibility of 'late start', part-time work and career breaks.
Published by: Penguin Books.

Springboard: A women's development workbook, by Liz Willis and Jenny Daisley.
From: Hawthorn Press.

Guidelines for good practice in women's education

Two whole issues of the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education's monthly journal *Adults Learning* have focused on education for women, and provide a wide range of commentaries and case studies. See *Adults Learning*, vol 1, no 4, December 1990, and vol 2, no 7, March 1991.

Completion Rates and other Performance Indicators in Educational Opportunities for Unwaged Adults, by Anna Dekker and Richard Whitfield.
A REPLAN Research report based on work at GLOSCAT. Applicable to all work with unwaged adults, including women.
Both the above available from: National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, 19B De Montfort Street, Leicester LE1 7GE.

WOMEN LEARNING: IDEAS, APPROACHES AND PRACTICAL SUPPORT

Women returning to learning and to work have created new markets and demands in education and training. Women want more than ever to be able to learn, earn and be actively involved in citizenship, and have themselves set the high standards demanded by high aspirations. *Women Learning: Ideas, approaches and practical support* is for everyone in education and training, whether college-based or working more informally, who wants to run courses for women. Its practical, concise, checklist approach makes it accessible to those who are undertaking such provision for the first time, as well as more experienced staff who want to reflect on their practice or just compare notes. It is written in a clear, jargon-free style, and draws on a wide range of established and innovative good practice in women's education.

The manual covers:

making women welcome

assessing needs

recruiting women learners

guidance and on-going support

learning strategies

progression

reviewing quality

staff support and development.

There are appendices on resources and materials, a reading list, and a checklist of good practice. *Women Learning: Ideas, approaches and practical support* will be useful to specialists and non-specialists in adult education and training, to advisory staff and policy-makers, and to staff development trainers.

Published and distributed by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education,
19B De Montfort Street, Leicester LE1 7GE.

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